

Story 1495 (Dicatated)

Narrator: Perihan Arıburun, in late 70s; widow of prominent political figure of the 1950s and 1960s

Location: Konya, Konya Province

Date: April 17, 1989

Nasreddin Hoca in the Zodiac

day Nareddin Hoca was asked to which constellation he belonged.

He answered, "I belong to the constellation of the Kid."¹

The person with whom he was talking said, "No, you cannot, for there is no such constellation. You must belong to the constellation of the Goat."²

"Well, when I was a child, my mother told me that I was born under the sign of the Kid. That was some time ago, however, and that animal could well be a Goat by now."

He must have been born near the end of December or the beginning of January, because that is the time when the sun crosses the area of the sky where the Goat is. We do not know exactly the date of his birth, but it must have been early in the thirteenth century. We do know when he died, for that date is on his tombstone. Because he was a comic person, the date

Turkish word is oğlak.

²The usual word for goat is keçi, but the Turkish word used for the zodiacal goat is Teke, which means literally male goat.

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is placed there backwards. It gives 4821 as the date, but it must have been 1284.³

³All of this assumes that there was an historical person named Nasreddin Hoca. This is a highly controversial matter. There are many Turks who believe fervently in the historicity of Nasreddin Hoca, and at the First International Nasreddin Hoca Symposium, held in Ankara in 1989, there were papers read which purported to be biographical, and there were others which discussed the supposed milieu in which the Hoca grew up. There are others who are convinced that Nasreddin Hoca was the product of folk imagination--a projection of one aspect of the collective psyche.

The death date cited is specious: 1284 on the modern (Gregorian) calendar would have been somewhere around 700 on the Hicri (Hegira) lunar calendar in use in Turkey in 1284 A.D.